

It

It leers at me from the mirror
In the morning,
When my sleep-dazed hand is combing
My sleep-wild hair.
Blurred, weaker than last night's teabag
On today's saucer,
Is its presence in the bathroom
But weak or not, it **is** there.

It is there when I step outside
For the morning paper.
It is there at night,
In the darkness, all around.
It follows me down the street
Though I cannot see it
And the footsteps that I hear
Are merely my own.
It has no special shape or scent or sound
Nevertheless, I **know** that it is near.

It stares at me from the shining
Open faces
Of sunflowers, daisies.
It lurks in the heart of the rose.
It glides off the dew-wet leaves
In the summer woods
And scrunches like broken glass
Under my foot.

It hunches, uninvited, in dim corners
At noisy, crowded parties, Saturday night.
In the midst of the clinking chinaware
And the music
It sidles up and silently reminds me
It will always find me
No matter where I go or what I do.

There is one place only
Where it will never follow
And that is on a roller coaster ride.
As I dip and dive through loops
Of polka-dot air,
My head grows dizzy, my bones are turned to jelly

And my blood sings out for joy that for a while
It is free, unfettered as a butterfly
And the feeling
Is indescribably sweet and light.

But I can't stay up in the air
Like that all night.
Eventually my freedom car slows down.
I totter, limp from laughing, to the exit
And there to meet me is a well-known sight,
Bigger and stronger than before my flight.
After the neon excitement has subsided
And darkness has muffled the last enraptured squeals,
There it is, shambling softly at my heels.

-- Edith Ogutsch

Los Angeles, California

Reformer

Three little girls
were eating pomegranates in the park
...red smears giggled across their lips....
and the October sun fought with clouds.
A boy wrestled a joyous dog
on the dry brown grass.
An old woman cackled. The pigeons, the sparrows
jousting for positions in oases
granted by the gentleness of old men.
Children were edgy with euphoria.
The pale man explored the mysteries
Of his battered shopping bag,
furtively ... though with industry.
A toyfaced squirrel sat at the alert,
awaiting his dole.
Girls flowed by in bouffant pretties,
ponytails and dungarees
and silken clinging things
and they electrified the autumnness
with a poignance that caught the throat
of the pale man, lost in his shopping bag.
A quick, sharp, dark man slapped a child.
A mouth organ quavered.